

“NOTHING IS TRUE, EVERYTHING IS PERMITTED”¹

Ideology as Political Weapon: How Bartol's *Alamut* Challenges the Justice of Plato's Republic

Republic



Totalitarian?
C.C.W. Taylor says yes

- ✓ **Authoritarianism:** marked by lack of significant power on the behalf of ordinary citizens to influence political decisions²

Only Hasan may make decisions; everyone below him executes them unconditionally and cannot question them or disobey them on pain of punishment or execution.

- ✓ **Ideology:** “a pervasive scheme of values... promoted by institutional means in order to direct all or the most significant aspects of public and private life towards the attainment of the goals dictated by those values”³

In *Alamut*, the true guiding motto is “nothing is true, everything is permitted.”¹ However, as the subjects know it, it is to defend the Ismaili faith.

The Role and Goal of Deception

“...if it is appropriate for anyone to use falsehoods for the good of the city, because of the actions of either enemies or citizens, it is the rulers”⁴

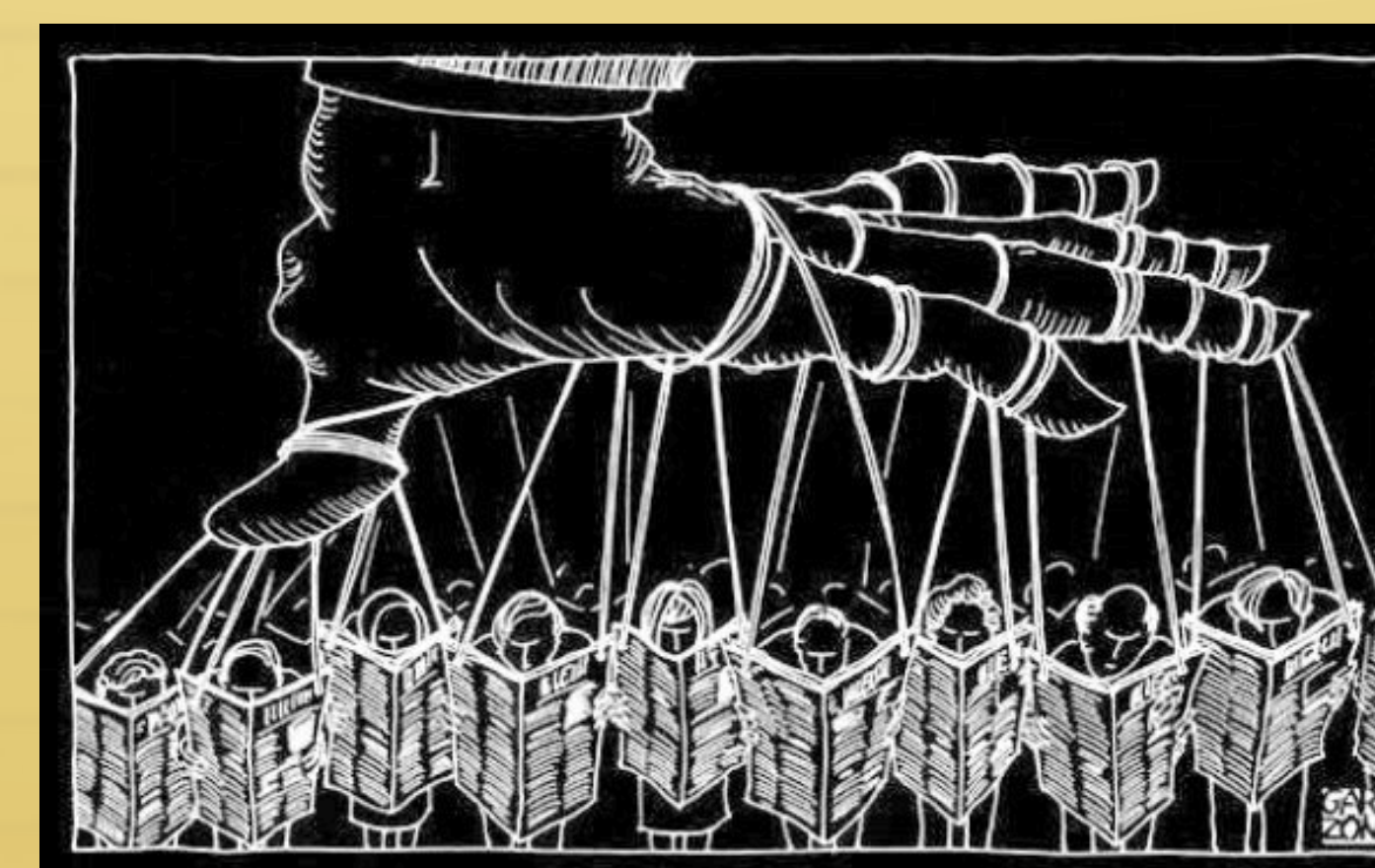
- Guardians are to be told stories that instill courage
- Citizens are to be told a noble lie, a myth of metals that designates their social positions as God-granted, in order to discourage internal discord by justifying class distinctions



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Rise of Totalitarianism



Bartol wrote *Alamut* in 1938 Slovenia, amidst the uprising of totalitarian regimes in Europe. It may be read as an **allegory of European totalitarianism**, Hasan as a composite of:

Hitler: “...the masses are like an animal that obeys its instincts. They do not reach conclusions by reasoning”⁶

Mussolini: “in order to give wise laws to a people it is also necessary to be something of an artist”⁷

Stalin: “Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas?”⁸



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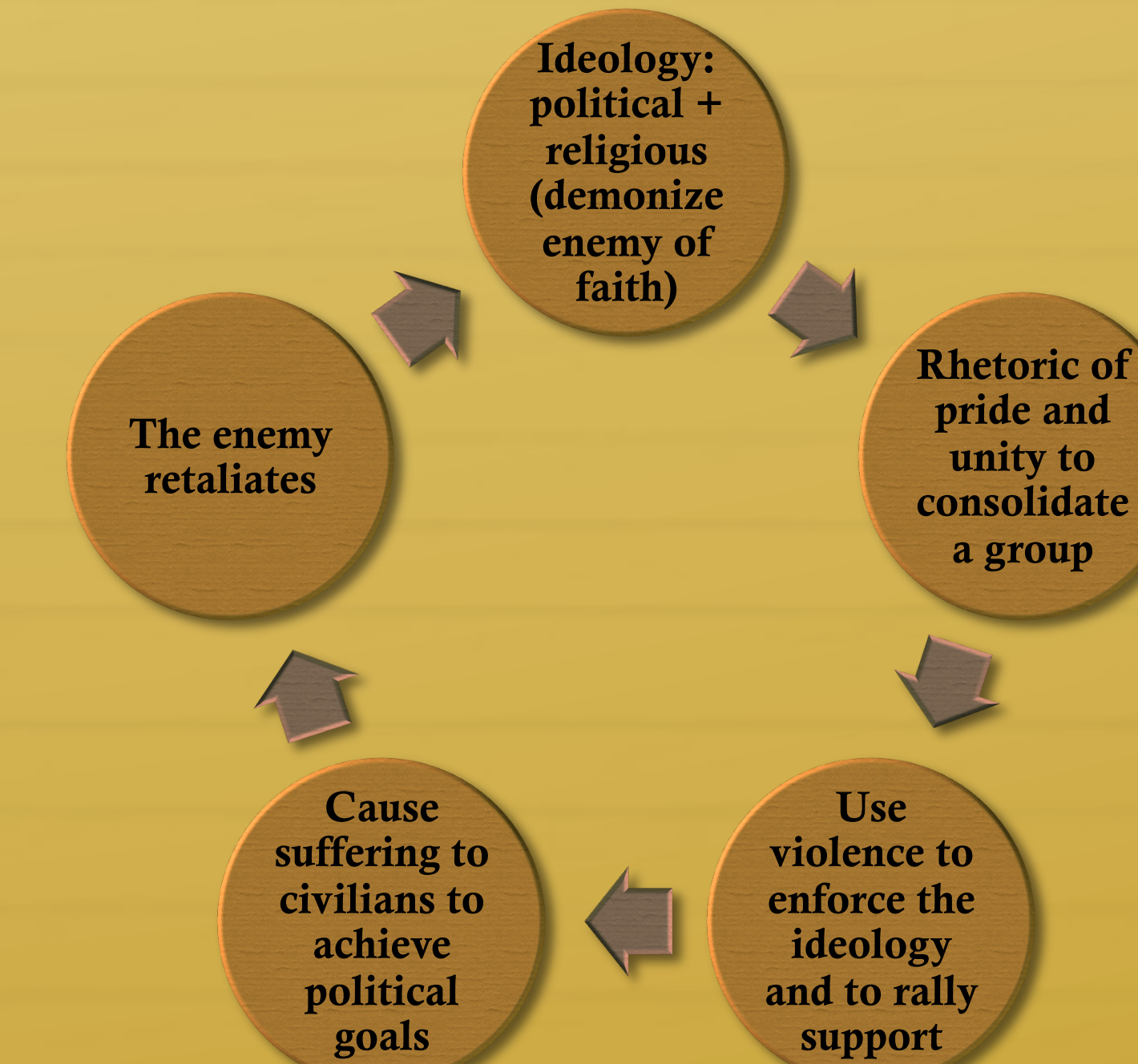


Implications



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Al-Qaeda also exhibits authoritarianism and ideology, and these reinforce one another: “The baiah or the pledge of allegiance serves as an assurance that those affiliating themselves to the organization are committed to the organization’s ideology. By instituting it, the organization is freed from conceptual problems arising from differences in opinion. To a certain degree, through it an acceptable level of uniformity is maintained which contributes to the organization’s stability and ease of management and administration.”⁹



Ideology in Terrorism



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A system based on Plato’s model can and has enabled **severe violations of individual human rights**; *Alamut* serves as a **cautionary tale** against the potential **unjust** consequences that may result from unchecked authoritarianism and ideology, particularly when deception is permitted

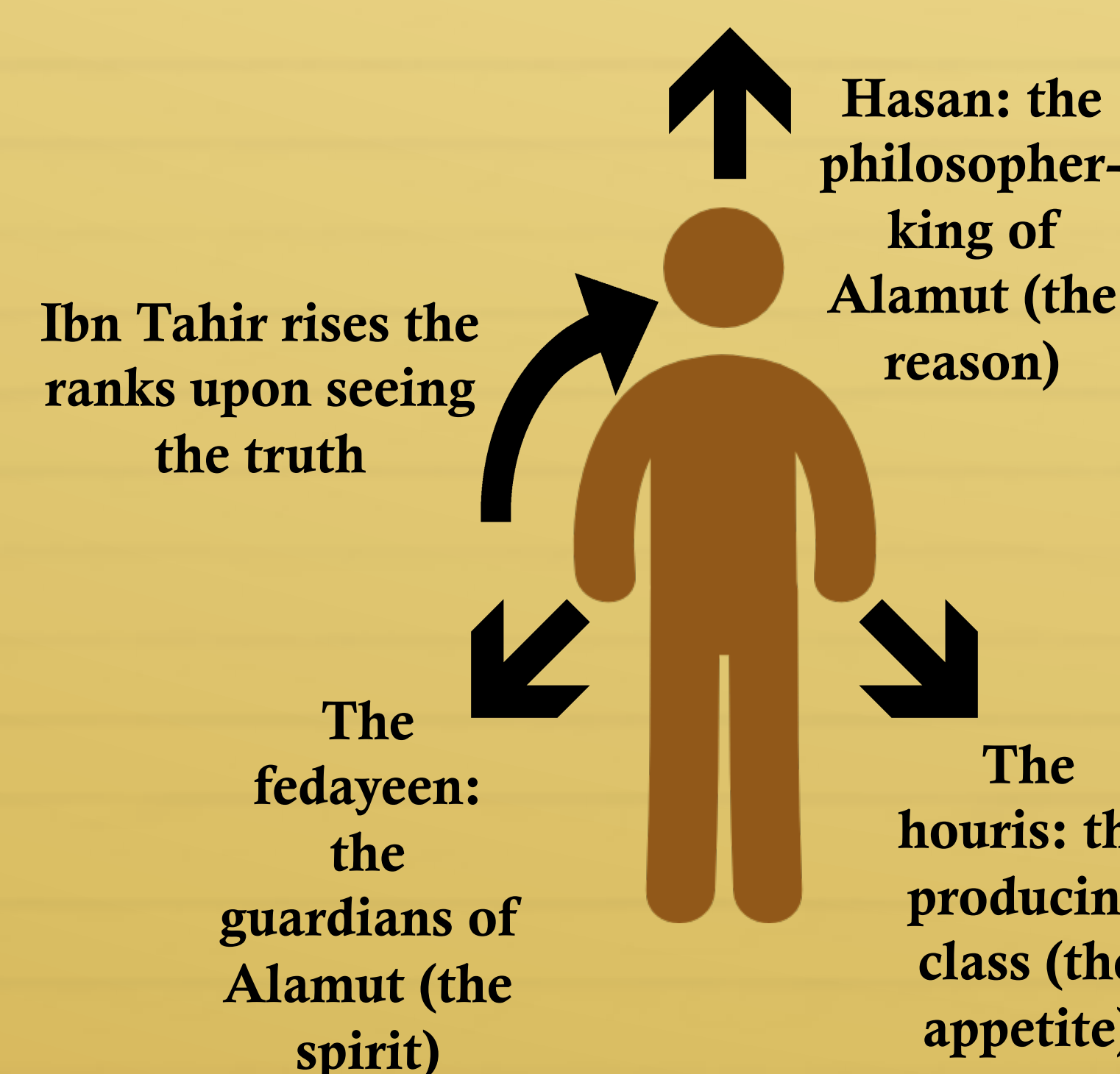
It seems that **ideology is inescapable**, but **critical thinking** can combat it and mediate access to truth (i.e. Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, *Alamut*’s ibn Tahir)

While *Alamut* **criticizes ideology**, it **also extends ideologies** about the Middle East’s relationship to terrorism

My project may be read as **advancing certain ideologies** for citing al-Qaeda; one must think for oneself and locate truth through different sources



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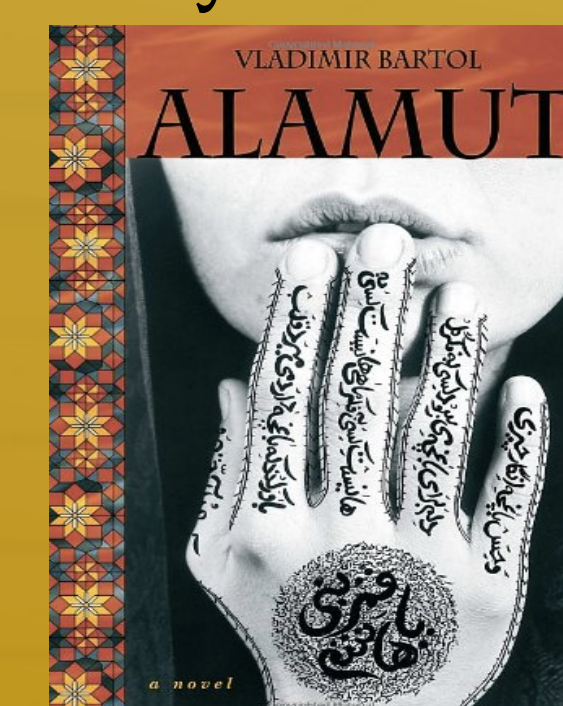
Hasan enforces his ideology and authoritarianism through deception:

1. Drugs fedayeen with hashish at night and brings them into paradise, which is actually just a garden
2. Places beautiful virgins, exotic animals and foods, etc. to evoke paradise
3. Brings fedayeen back; they believe that he has been enabled by Allah to show them to paradise
4. They yearn to return; the only way back is death.
5. The fedayeen are prepared to obey Hasan and sacrifice their lives to return to paradise

“Do you think the overwhelming majority of people care about the truth? Far from it! They want to be left alone, and they want fairy tales to feed their hungry imaginations. But what about justice? They couldn’t care less, as long as you meet their personal needs...If this is what humankind is like, then exploit its weaknesses to achieve your higher goals, which will benefit them too, even though they don’t understand that.”⁵

Alamut:

Plato’s System in Motion



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